

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-04 ISO-00 SAM-01 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0774

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

AMCONSUL LUANDA

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

DIA

USCINCEUR

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT MILI PO

SUBJ: ARMED FORCES COORDINATING COMMITTEE BEGINS

WHAT APPEARS TO BE CAMPAIGN TO DISCREDIT SPINOLA

SUMMARY: OTELO SARAIVA DE CARVALHO AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE OF ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT HAVE BEGUN GRANTING A SERIES OF PRESS INTERVIEWS IN WHICH THEY DESCRIBE GEN. SPINOLA'S ACTIONS THE NIGHT OF SEPTEMBER 28. THE PORTRAYAL OF SPINOLA IS UNFAVORABLE, AND IS ONE OF A MAN WHO UNABLE TO MAINTAIN CONTROL OF MILITARY UNITS AND WHO BECAME PSYCHOLOGICALLY UNBALANCED UNDER STRESS. THESE AND OTHER CHARGES SEEM DESIGNED TO DEFLATE GENERAL'S MYTHICAL IMAGE, PERHAPS IN ORDER TO DECREASE HIS ELECTORAL SUPPORT SHOULD HE DECIDE TO REMAIN IN
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POLITICS, AND TO UNDERCUT HIS SUPPORT WITHIN THE MILITARY.

END SUMMARY.

1. THE POLITICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE (PCC) OF THE ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT (AFM), WHICH HAS UNTIL NOW MAINTAINED NEAR TOTAL SILENCE REGARDING THE ROLE OF SPINOLA IN THE EVENTS OF SEPTEMBER 28-30, HAS BEGUN WHAT APPEARS TO BE A CAMPAIGN DESIGNED TO DISCREDIT SPINOLA IN THE EYES OF THE PUBLIC AT LARGE AND IN THE EYES OF HIS MILITARY COMRADES. A LEADING MEMBER OF THE PCC, BRIG. OTELO SARAIVA DE CARVALHO (OPERATIONAL LEADER OF COPCON AND MILITARY GOVERNOR OF LISBON) HAS GIVEN FOUR PRESS INTERVIEWS IN PORTUGAL AND OTHERS TO THE FOREIGN PRESS IN THE LAST FEW DAYS IN WHICH HE PROVIDES A DETAILED ACCOUNT OF THE HAPPENINGS IN THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE IN BELEM THE NIGHT OF THE 28TH, AND IN WHICH SPINOLA IS PORTRAYED IN AN EXTREMELY UNFAVORABLE LIGHT.

2. OTELO SARAIVA PICTURES SPINOLA ON THE NIGHT OF THE 28TH AS NERVOUS, EXTREMELY AGITATED, BESIDE HIMSELF WITH FEAR THAT OTELO WOULD PULL A LEFTIST COUP USING COPCON FORCES, AND PSYCHOLOGICALLY "UNBALANCED" BY HIS EXCESSIVE PREOCCUPATION WITH THE "MENACE" OF COMMUNISM. OTELO, DISCUSSING HIS RUMORED ARREST BY SPINOLA ON THE 28TH, SAID THAT, ALTHOUGH HE HAD NOT BEEN FORMALLY ARRESTED, HE WAS IN FACT CALLED TO BELEM TO BE DETAINED. HE WAS TWICE PREVENTED BY SPINOLA OR JUNTA AIDES FROM LEAVING ON VARIOUS PRETEXTS, AND MANAGED TO LEAVE ONLY AFTER REPEATED WARNINGS TO HIS "HOSTS" THAT COPCON WOULD FORCEFULLY LIBERATE HIM IF NEED BE.

3. ALTHOUGH OTELO DOES NOT COME OUT AND CLEARLY STATE THAT SPINOLA TRIED TO PULL A COUP, HE ALLEGES THAT HE WAS "TRYING TO LINE UP ALL FORCES ON HIS SIDE", BUT THAT IN THE END VARIOUS MILITARY UNITS THAT EVENING REFUSED TO OBEY THE PRESIDENT, AND WOULD ONLY TAKE ORDERS FROM OTELO. SPINOLA, CLAIMS OTELO, COULD NOT CONTROL THE AFM WHICH PROVED TOO BIG TO HANDLE FOR SOMEONE "NOT RESPECTED BY THE MOVEMENT", AND "NOT IN TUNE WITH IT". WHEN HE REALIZED THIS FACT HE LET OTELO RETURN TO COPCON, AND MADE HIS DECISION TO RESIGN.

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4. OTELO ESPECIALLY CRITICIZED THE POOR ADVISERS WITH WHOM SPINOLA SURROUNDED HIMSELF AS BEARING GREAT RESPONSIBLE FOR SPINOLA'S ACTIONS DURING THE CRISIS. THEY WERE NOT IMPARTIAL COUNSELLORS, BUT RATHER IDOLIZED THE PRESIDENT, CONSTANTLY RAISED IN HIS MIND THE COMMUNIST SPECTRE, AND DID NOT FULLY INFORM HIM OF WHAT WAS GOING ON AROUND HIM. OTELO SPECIFICALLY

CRITICIZED GALVAO DE MELO AS THE FLAGBEARER FOR
REACTIONARIES AND THE TOOL OF HIGH FINANCE.

5. COMMENT: IT IS WIDELY HELD BELIEF THAT GENERAL
SPINOLA HAS NOT DROPPED OUT OF POLITICS FOR GOOD, THAT
HE WILL SUPPORT EITHER THE PPD OR THE CDS IN THE MARCH
ELECTIONS, AND THAT HE WILL BE A CANDIDATE FOR
PRESIDENT IN THE FOLLOWING ROUND OF ELECTIONS. UNTIL
NOW, PORTUGUESE NEWSPAPERS, ON DIRECT ORDER FROM PRIME
MINISTER GONCALVES, HAVE NOT BEEN ALLOWED TO PRINT A
FULL ACCOUNT OF WHAT THEY SEE AS AN ABORTIVE COUP
ATTEMPT BY SPINOLA, AND HAVE NOT BEEN ALLOWED TO CRITICIZE
SPINOLA DIRECTLY, PROBABLY BECAUSE TO DO SO WOULD WIDEN
EXISTING DIVISIONS IN THE AFM, AND OFFEND HIS GOOD
FRIEND COSTA GOMES. HOWEVER, IT APPEARS THAT THE AFM
BELIEVES, PERHAPS NOW THAT ITS ELECTIONS TO FILL THE
VACANT JUNTA SLOTS HAVE TAKEN PLACE, THAT IT CAN SAFELY
BEGIN TO DEFLATE THE PUBLIC IMAGE OF THE GENERAL. IT
LOOKS LIKE IT WILL WHITTLE AWAY AT SPINOLA'S
CHARACTER, CALL INTO QUESTION HIS JUDGEMENT, AND ATTACK
HIS FIDELITY TO THE AFM PROGRAM AND TO DEMOCRATIC
PROCESSES, PRESUMABLY TO REDUCE HIS POPULAR APPEAL AND
UNDERCUT HIS REMAINING SUPPORT IN THE ARMED FORCES. IT
APPEARS THAT THE AFM FEARS AND WANTS TO REDUCE THE
CHANCES THAT THE GENERAL MIGHT BE ELECTED PRESIDENT
NEXT YEAR, WHICH IN THEIR OPINION WOULD HALT OR SLOW DOWN THE PACE
OF SOCIAL PROGRESS WHICH THEY BELIEVE NECESSARY FOR PORTUGAL.
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